

The Essence of the Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

The curriculum is the heart of the education system which has a function as a frame of reference in organizing the learning process. In essence, a curriculum is not just a written document containing a list of subjects, but a comprehensive design that includes the entire learning experience planned and guided by an educational institution. The curriculum is dynamic because it is easily adapted to circumstances and adaptive to the development of the times, reflecting the philosophical, sociological, psychological, and pedagogical values embraced in the education system of a country. As a tool to achieve educational goals, the curriculum contains four main interrelated components: objectives, material or content, learning strategies or methods, and evaluation. The objectives of the curriculum are derived from the objectives of national education which reflect the aspirations of the community. Curriculum materials are selected and designed to achieve these goals. Learning strategies determine the approaches, methods, and techniques used in implementing the curriculum. As for evaluation, it serves to measure the success rate of achieving goals and provide feedback for curriculum improvement. In terms of implementation, the curriculum has three forms: the written curriculum (intended curriculum), the implemented curriculum (implemented curriculum), and the experienced curriculum (experienced curriculum). The gap between these three forms of curriculum is often a challenge in achieving educational effectiveness. Therefore, curriculum development needs to be carried out systematically, scientifically, and involving various stakeholders to ensure the relevance, sustainability, and significance of the curriculum in facilitating the optimal development of students' potential.

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INTRODUCTION

Curriculum is one of the most important components in the education system. As an instrument that directs the learning process, the curriculum has a strategic role in shaping students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Understanding the nature of the curriculum is very important to be able to develop and implement quality educational activities. This paper will comprehensively discuss the definition, role, and function of the curriculum, the differences between ideal and actual curriculum, the phenomenon of hidden curriculum, and the characteristics of the Islamic education curriculum.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses qualitative research methods in the creation of a Journal of the Nature of Curriculum, research on the essence of curriculum increasingly relies on a qualitative approach to understand the complexity of curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation in depth. The qualitative method allows researchers to explore various perspectives of educational stakeholders and socio-cultural contexts that influence the curriculum. In recent journals, case studies have become the dominant method that allows for an in-depth analysis of curriculum implementation in a specific environment. The researcher conducted field observations, in-depth interviews, and discussions involving practitioners and observers of the world of education to collect data and deepen meaning. The phenomenological approach is also used to understand the subjective experiences of educators and students in implementing the curriculum. Analysis of curriculum documents with a hermeneutic approach helps to uncover the philosophical meaning, values, and ideologies

underlying the curriculum. Narrative research is increasingly popular to capture the story of curriculum implementation experiences from various perspectives. Gathering data sources, methods, theories and various studies is the key to ensuring the truth of a finding. Recent journals show a trend of using mixed methods with an emphasis on qualitative components to provide a richer contextual understanding. The use of qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo and ATLAS.ti assists researchers in the organization and interpretation of complex data. The grounded theory approach allows the development of new theories about the essence of the curriculum that are rooted in empirical data. The process of extraction, examination and selective grouping of data is used to identify key themes. Collaborative action research is also applied by researchers to involve education practitioners directly in the development and evaluation of evidence-based curriculum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Definition, Role, and Function of the Curriculum

Definition of Curriculum

Literally, the term curriculum comes from the Latin *currere* which means running on the field of competition. From this understanding, the curriculum is a competition arena or where students compete to master one or more skills to reach the finish line, in this case it can be in the form of awarding a diploma, diploma or bachelor's degree (Zais, 1976). This notion has a considerable effect in the world of education, and lasts long enough that it is able to determine the curriculum goals of almost all countries in the world (Prof. Mohamad Ansyar, 2017).

As for the pronouns, curriculum nouns and verbs *currere* which means to run which then developed into a study program. The participants compete by prioritizing individual capacity in order to be able to actualize themselves in the past, present and future. From the results of their respective self-actualization, they have a certain vision in treading the future life. This means the concept of curriculum, if referring to the last understanding, can be said to be the acquisition of an individual's perspective on life (Prof. Mohamad Ansyar, 2017). Initially, the curriculum was interpreted narrowly as a collection of subjects that students must take to obtain a diploma. However, in its development, the definition of the curriculum has become broader and more complex.

Some definitions of the curriculum from experts:

1. According to S. Nasution, a curriculum is a plan that is prepared to facilitate the teaching and learning process under the guidance and responsibility of schools or educational institutions and their teaching staff.
2. Harold B. Albery defines the curriculum as all the activities that the school provides to the students.
3. Saylor and Alexander state that the curriculum is all the school's efforts to influence students in learning, whether in the classroom, in the school yard, or outside of school.
4. Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System defines the curriculum as a set of plans and arrangements regarding the objectives, content, and subject matter as well as the methods used as guidelines for the implementation of learning activities to achieve certain educational goals.

From these various definitions, it can be concluded that the curriculum is a series of plans and arrangements regarding the objectives, content, teaching materials, learning activities, and evaluations that are used as guidelines for the implementation of education to achieve the expected educational goals.

The Role of the Curriculum

The curriculum has several important roles in the education system:

1. **Conservative Role:** The curriculum plays a role in transmitting and interpreting social heritage in the younger generation. In this case, the curriculum helps preserve various values and cultures of the community.
2. **Critical and Evaluative Role:** The curriculum helps students think critically and evaluatively about social values, not only accept socio-cultural heritage for granted, but be able to choose the appropriate and reject the inappropriate.
3. **Creative Role:** The curriculum plays a role in developing new things in accordance with the demands of the times and the needs of current and future society.
4. **Integrative Role:** The curriculum functions to educate integrated individuals, namely human beings who are in accordance or in harmony with their environment.

Curriculum Functions

The curriculum has several functions in education:

1. **Adjustive Function:** The curriculum functions to adapt to changes and demands of the times.
2. **Integration Function:** The curriculum serves to prepare students to become fully integrated

members of society.

3. Differentiation Function: The curriculum functions to provide services to individual differences in society.

4. Propaedeutic Function: The curriculum serves to prepare students to be able to continue their studies to a higher level.

5. Selective Function: The curriculum serves to provide opportunities for students to choose a learning program according to their interests and abilities.

6. Diagnostic Function: The curriculum serves as a tool to help students understand their strengths, weaknesses, interests, and talents.

Ideal and Actual Curriculum

Ideal Curriculum

An ideal curriculum (curriculum as plan) is a curriculum that contains something ideal, which is aspired to be as stated in a written document. The ideal curriculum is a philosophical conceptual foundation that becomes a guideline in the development of the actual curriculum.

Characteristics of the ideal curriculum:

1. Compiled by experts in education and field of study
2. Contains educational goals that are to be achieved nationally
3. Contains learning materials that are considered important and relevant
4. Includes recommended learning strategies
5. Load a standardized evaluation system
6. Written and formal

The ideal curriculum is a reference for teachers in carrying out the learning process. The ideal curriculum is a guideline for educators in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning activities in schools.

Actual Curriculum

An actual curriculum (curriculum in action) is a curriculum that is actually implemented by teachers in the learning process in the classroom. The actual curriculum is the implementation of an ideal curriculum that is tailored to the conditions, needs, and abilities of the school as well as the characteristics of students.

Characteristics of the actual curriculum:

1. Influenced by the teacher's ability and interpretation of the ideal curriculum
2. Related to the learning conditions and situations faced
3. Influenced by the availability of educational facilities and infrastructure
4. Considering the characteristics and needs of students
5. Dynamic and flexible

The actual curriculum often undergoes adjustments due to various factors, such as teacher competence, availability of learning resources, facilities and infrastructure, and learning environment conditions. In practice, there is often a gap between the ideal curriculum and the actual curriculum caused by various factors, both internal and external.

Hidden Curriculum

Definition of Hidden Curriculum

A hidden curriculum is a curriculum that is not formally planned in a curriculum document but has a great influence on the formation of students' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. The hidden curriculum includes the norms, values, beliefs, and culture that are formed in social interactions in the school environment. The term "hidden curriculum" was first introduced by Philip Jackson in his book "Life in Classrooms" (1968). Jackson identified that in schools there are aspects of education that are not formally written but have a great influence on the formation of students' character.

Characteristics of the Hidden Curriculum

Some of the characteristics of the hidden curriculum include:

1. Not explicitly planned but has an effect on changes in students' grades, perceptions, and behaviors
2. It is the result of practices, procedures, rules, relationships, structures, and activities that take place in the school environment
3. Not formally and systematically evaluated
4. Implicit and implied
5. It can have a positive or negative impact on the formation of students' character

Hidden Curriculum Forms

Hidden curriculum can appear in a variety of forms, including:

1. **School Physical Environment:** School layout, cleanliness, beauty, and regularity can teach students the values of order, beauty, and cleanliness.
2. **Social Atmosphere in Schools:** The pattern of interaction between teachers and students, students with students, and other school residents can form an attitude of respect, tolerance, cooperation, or vice versa.
3. **School Rules and Policies:** The reward and punishment system, discipline enforcement, and various school rules can teach the values of discipline, fairness, and responsibility.
4. **Teacher Example:** Teachers' attitudes, ways of dressing, speaking, and behavior can be models that students emulate.
5. **School Culture:** The rituals, routines, habits, and traditions that take place in schools can shape certain values in students.

The Influence of the Hidden Curriculum

Hidden curriculum has a significant influence on the formation of students' character and personality, often even more powerful than formal curriculum. Students can learn values such as honesty, responsibility, leadership, tolerance, and cooperation through everyday experiences at school, rather than from formal subjects. However, hidden curriculum can also have a negative impact if the implied values conflict with the expected educational goals. For example, if there is an unhealthy culture of seniority, discrimination, or unfair treatment in schools, this can form negative attitudes and behaviors in students.

Islamic Education Curriculum

Definition of Islamic Education Curriculum

The Islamic education curriculum can be defined as a set of plans and arrangements regarding the objectives, content, teaching materials, and learning methods that are used as guidelines in the implementation of Islamic education to achieve educational goals based on Islamic values.

According to Omar Mohammad Al-Toumy Al-Syaibany, the Islamic education curriculum is a bright path that educators take with educated people to develop their knowledge, skills, and attitudes based on Islamic values.

Characteristics of Islamic Education Curriculum

The Islamic education curriculum has different characteristics from the educational curriculum in general. Some of these characteristics include:

1. **Oriented to Tauhid:** The Islamic education curriculum makes tauhid (the oneness of Allah) the main foundation in all aspects of education.
2. **Integrative between Religious Science and General Science:** The Islamic education curriculum does not separate between religious science and general science, all knowledge is seen as the verses of Allah, both the expressed (Qauliyah) and the implied (Kauniyah).
3. **Comprehensive and Balanced:** The Islamic education curriculum pays balanced attention to the development of the intellectual (intellect), spiritual (spirit), and physical (body) aspects of students.
4. **Oriented to the World and the Hereafter:** The Islamic education curriculum focuses not only on worldly success but also on ukhrawi happiness.
5. **Based on the Qur'an and As-Sunnah:** All educational content and processes in the Islamic education curriculum refer to the main sources of Islamic teachings, namely the Qur'an and As-Sunnah.

Objectives of the Islamic Education Curriculum

The main objective of the Islamic education curriculum is to form human beings who:

Insan Kamil: A perfect human being who has a balance between physical, intellectual, and spiritual aspects.

Abdullah (Servant of Allah): A person who is submissive and obedient to Allah SWT, carries out His commands and shuns His prohibitions.

Khalifatullah fil Ardh: Man as the representative of Allah on earth who is able to manage and prosper the earth well.

Moral Karimah: A human being who has noble morals as exemplified by the Prophet PBUH.

Components of the Islamic Education Curriculum

The Islamic education curriculum consists of several important components:

1. **Objectives:** Includes the final goal (formation of kamil) and intermediate goals that support the achievement of the final goal.

2. Material/Content: Includes materials sourced from the Qur'an, As-Sunnah, and relevant sciences, both religious and general sciences.
3. Methods: Various methods and approaches used in the learning process in accordance with Islamic values.
4. Evaluation: An assessment process to measure the achievement of Islamic educational goals, both cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects.

The implementation of the Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia is manifested in various forms:

Madrasah (MI, MTs, MA): A formal educational institution that integrates religious science and general science with a composition of 30% religious science and 70% general science. Madrasas are under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion and follow the national curriculum with emphasis on religious aspects.

Integrated Islamic School: An educational institution that applies an approach to education delivery by combining general education and religious education into a single curriculum. Integrated Islamic Schools strive to integrate Islamic values into all aspects of learning.

Islamic boarding school: A traditional Islamic educational institution that focuses on teaching Islamic sciences. In its development, many Islamic boarding schools have adopted a modern curriculum while maintaining the traditional values of Islamic boarding schools.

Islamic Religious Education in Public Schools: The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum taught in public schools as a compulsory subject for Muslim students.

Challenges and Development of the Islamic Education Curriculum

In the era of globalization and rapid technological development, the Islamic education curriculum faces various challenges:

Integration of Science and Technology: The challenge of integrating modern scientific and technological developments with Islamic values without creating conflict or conflict.

Relevance to the Needs of the Times: The challenge of maintaining the relevance of the curriculum to the needs of the times and the demands of the job market without sacrificing Islamic values.

Century Skills Development: Challenges to developing 21st century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration within the framework of Islamic values.

Strengthening Religious Moderation: The challenge of developing a curriculum that strengthens religious moderation and tolerance in the midst of the phenomenon of radicalism and extremism.

To face these challenges, the development of the Islamic education curriculum needs to be carried out continuously by involving various stakeholders. Curriculum development must be based on the basic principles of Islamic teachings and consider the development of science, technology, and the needs of society.

CONCLUSION

The curriculum is an important component in the education system that functions as a guideline in the implementation of learning activities. Understanding the nature of the curriculum including the definition, role, and function of the curriculum is very important to be able to develop and implement quality education. The curriculum does not only include aspects that are formally planned (ideal curriculum), but also aspects that are actually implemented in the field (actual curriculum) and aspects that are not planned but have an effect on the formation of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of students (hidden curriculum).

In the context of Islamic education, the curriculum has special characteristics that are based on the Qur'an and As-Sunnah. The Islamic education curriculum aims to form kamil people who have a balance between physical, intellectual, and spiritual aspects, and are able to carry out their role as servants of Allah and caliphs on earth. A comprehensive understanding of the nature of the curriculum will help educators, curriculum developers, and other education stakeholders in designing, implementing, and evaluating a curriculum that is in accordance with the expected educational goals, and able to respond to the challenges of the times in the current and future contexts.

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